

The Bishop's Chaplain
The Revd Sam Cheesman

6th July 2020

Dear colleagues

I wanted to take the opportunity to write to you all about confirmation services this year and next.

Confirmations are an important part of the work of the Church in engaging with children and with adults, particularly in Blackburn Diocese. Allowing people to affirm their faith in Jesus Christ in a public setting is a cause for celebration, and all three of the Bishops have very much enjoyed going to different churches and seeing the discipleship and preparation courses that have gone before the service. That is why it is with sadness that we must cancel all confirmation services this year, until January 2021.

We recently received updated guidance on how these services might be able to go ahead this year and do not feel that they allow for a service and celebration as it should be. With serious constraints on numbers, social distancing between candidates and measures such as washing hands with soap and water between each candidate all being necessary, the focus would not be where it should, that is on God and what He has done in the lives of each of the candidates.

With this in mind it is important that we now start the process of booking in confirmation dates for next year. Please could you send in requests to secretary@bishopofblackburn.org.uk in the following way:

- Name of the Church where the confirmation is to take place;
- Name of primary point of contact (and their contact details);
- 3 possible dates for the confirmation service, including times;
- Any special requests including if it is to be within a Eucharistic setting.

The last date for these to be received is **Friday the 28th August 2020**. Past this date we will not be able to guarantee availability for a service as diaries will no doubt be very full following the cancellations this year. You may wish to discuss this with your deanery or local colleagues as joint confirmations are sometimes a good option and your area dean may wish to know where different confirmations will be happening next year.

These services will then be divided between the Bishops based on availability and other factors, and the secretary of the designated Bishop will then hope to contact you within 2 weeks of the 28th August to confirm a time and send the relevant paperwork through to you.

We are very sorry to cancel the confirmations for this year, but hopefully it will lead to a larger group of candidates next year and even bigger celebrations. If there is any reason why confirmation might be seen as essential this year, please do get in touch with me directly.

With thanks for your support in this,

Sam